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The Victimization of Native American Women in the United States:

The Impact and Potential Underlying Factors

By

Kaci Clement

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment  
Of the Requirements for the  
University Honors Program

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Department of Health Science  
The University of South Dakota  
May 2020

The members of the Honors Thesis Committee appointed  
to examine the thesis of Kaci Clement  
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## ABSTRACT

### The Victimization of Native American Women in the United States: The Impact and Potential Underlying Factors

Kaci Clement

Director: Jamie A. Turgeon-Drake

In recent decades, a topic of concern that has gained attention in the United States and throughout the world is violence against women. Surveys conducted nationally have found that there is a correlation between which racial group a woman identifies as and her likelihood to be victimized at some point in her life. American Indian/Alaskan Native women, in particular, are impacted by violence at disproportionate rates. However, definitive reasoning for the high rates of violence in these groups has not been fully investigated. There is a lack of surveillance and dissemination regarding this specific topic as well as other issues concerning Native American individuals. A survey was conducted to better understand public awareness of areas of concern for women, with a specific interest in Native American women. Additionally, the survey determined the respondents' perceived prevalence of missing women in the United States. The results of the survey indicate that there is still much to be done to better inform the public of the numerous issue facing women in the United States. More accurate and diverse media representation for minority populations is one area that could improve how the general public perceives issues facing more invisible ethnic and racial groups.

**KEYWORDS:** American Indian and Alaska Native (AI and AN), violence, women, trauma, media, indigenous

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION .....	1
CHAPTER 2: PREVALENCE IN SOCIETY .....	4
CHAPTER 3: IMPACT ON THE WOMEN .....	11
CHAPTER 4: REPRESENTATION IN MEDIA .....	17
CHAPTER 5: HISTORY OF TRAUMA .....	23
CHAPTER 6: POLICY & EDUCATION .....	34
CHAPTER 7: RATIONALE .....	39
CHAPTER 8: METHODS .....	40
CHAPTER 9: RESULTS .....	44
CHAPTER 10: DISCUSSION .....	55
CHAPTER 11: CONCLUSION .....	60
APPENDICES .....	63
APPENDIX A: .....	64
APPENDIX B: .....	65
APPENDIX C: .....	66
APPENDIX D: .....	68
REFERENCES .....	72

## LIST OF FIGURES

FIGURE 1: CYLE OF HISTORICAL TRAUMA .....	24
FIGURE 2: CONCEPTUAL MODEL OF HISTORICAL TRAUMA .....	30
FIGURE 3: RESPONSES TO S2:Q5 .....	46
FIGURE 4: RESPONSES TO S3:Q1 .....	46
FIGURE 5: RESPONSES TO S3:Q2 .....	46
FIGURE 6: RESPONSES TO S3:Q5 .....	47
FIGURE 7: RESPONSES TO S3:Q6 .....	47
FIGURE 8: RESPONSES TO S3:Q3 .....	47
FIGURE 9: RESPONSES TO S3:Q4 .....	48
FIGURE 10: RESPONSES TO S3:Q7 .....	48
FIGURE 11: RESPONSES TO S3:Q8 .....	48
FIGURE 12: RESPONSES TO S3:Q9 .....	49
FIGURE 13: RESPONSES TO S3:Q10 .....	49

## LIST OF TABLES

TABLE 1: QUESTIONS FROM SECTION 3 OF THE ONLINE SURVEY .....	41
TABLE 2: PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHICS .....	45
TABLE 3: RESPONSES TO S3:Q11 .....	50
TABLE 4: RESPONSES TO S3:Q12 .....	51
TABLE 5: DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS FOR S3:Q11 AND S3:Q12 .....	52
TABLE 6: RESPONSES TO S3:Q13 .....	52
TABLE 7: TWO TAILED T-TEST (S3:Q1 & S3:Q5) .....	53
TABLE 8: TWO TAILED T-TEST (S3:Q3 & S3:Q7) .....	54

## **PREFACE**

### **A Note on Terminology**

There are more than 550 federally recognized American Indian and Alaska Native tribes in the USA. However, not all Indigenous peoples within the USA and its overseas territories have been accorded this status, including, for example, the Indigenous peoples of Hawaii. Some peoples are recognized by states but not by the federal government. Individuals may identify as Indigenous even if they are not recognized as tribal members by federal or state authorities.

It is important to note that no single term is universally accepted by all Indigenous peoples in the USA. Various terms are used throughout [this paper] where they seem most suited to the context. However, these choices are in no way intended to minimize or ignore the great diversity of Indigenous cultures, languages and nationalities that exist within the USA, nor to generalize their experiences. The decisions on terminology in [this paper] have been guided by a number of factors, including the need to ensure that the report is as accessible as possible to diverse audiences both within the USA and around the world ... by alternating the terms used, readers will better understand the diversity of Indigenous peoples and cultures in the USA. (Amnesty International, 2008)



## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **Introduction**

Violence against women in sexual, physical, and all other forms is devastating to individuals, families, and communities. Women represent a strong majority, 89 percent (Rennison, 2002), of the individuals reporting sexual assault in the United States. Not only are women more likely to be victimized in this way, women are also more likely than men to report an injury during their assault (Tjaden & Thoennes, 2000). The consequences of this violence in our society are pervasive and can extend into multiple realms. Physical, emotional, and financial wellness are all endangered by the high rates of violence perpetrated against women. While women are at a higher risk of sexual violence than men, there are other factors that make certain populations of women more likely to be impacted than others.

Racial and ethnic affiliation are one predictor of sexual violence in women. Surveys conducted nationally have found that there is a correlation between which racial group a woman identifies as and her likelihood to be victimized at some point in her life. American Indian/Alaskan Native (AI/AN) women, in particular, are impacted by violence at disproportionate rates (Tjaden & Thoennes, 2000). More than 80 percent of AI/AN women have experienced some form of violence in their lifetime (Rosay, 2016). This violence may include physical, psychological, or sexual forms, but they all negatively

impact the wellness of the affected women. However, definitive reasoning for the high rates of violence in this and other similar groups has not been fully investigated.

Reasoning behind the high rates of violence perpetrated against minority women, and specifically Native American women, is not easily explained. This issue is multifaceted and could include factors that stem from historical trauma reactions seen in modern generations of Native Americans. Other factors involved may be the representation or lack thereof of these populations in the media or weak laws and policies concerning the safety of AI/AN women. There also seems to be a lack of surveillance and dissemination regarding sexual violence as well as other issues concerning Native American individuals.

The problem of violence against indigenous women needs to be recognized and fully investigated throughout the world. Within the United States this topic impacts many different states and individual organizations. With nine federally recognized tribes within state borders, South Dakota is a major stakeholder in the health and wellness of the Native American women living in the state. The University of South Dakota is another key stakeholder in this issue. The diversity and inclusiveness statement of USD recognizes the strong ties between the state, the University, and Native American groups:

Acknowledging and paying particular attention to our strong historical and cultural Native American roots, USD is committed to strengthening existing relationships and developing new relationships with Native American tribes, organizations and communities within the state, the region and the nation. (USD Executive Committee, 2013)

This thesis will explore the topic of sexual violence perpetrated against AI/AN women and the public's awareness of this issue. A literature review will examine the

prevalence and impact that sexual violence has in our society as well as several factors that may influence Native American women's rate of victimization. A survey was also conducted to better understand public awareness of areas of concern for women. Additionally, the survey determined the respondents' perceived prevalence of missing women in the United States. The results of the survey indicate that there is still much to be done to better inform the public of the numerous issue facing women in the United States. More accurate and diverse media representation for minority populations is one area that could improve how the general public perceives issues facing more invisible ethnic and racial groups. Understanding the perceptions that the public holds on this issue is one step to bringing these issues to the public eye.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **Prevalence in Society**

The prevalence of violence against women in the United States has been a topic of major concern in recent decades. Nationwide studies conducted in the last twenty years have been crucial for better understanding how violence, especially sexual violence, impacts women in the United States. According to a summary produced by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), before the National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey was conducted in 2010, the most recent detailed national data on the public health burden from sexual violence was obtained almost 15 years previously from the National Violence against Women Survey conducted from 1995 to 1996 (Breiding, Smith, Basile, Walters, Chen, Merrick, 2014). This large gap in data gathering demonstrates a need for better surveillance of information concerning this topic. Collecting data and fully interpreting it is crucial to understand the complete impact of violence against women in our society.

To understand the burden of violence against women, especially minority women, the scope of the problem can be better grasped by understanding the total size of these specific populations in the United States. Using five-year estimates of the 2011-2015 American Community Survey conducted by the U.S Census Bureau, the total population of individuals who identify as AI/AN alone or in combination with one or more other races is 5,309,095 with a margin of error of 19,117 (2017). This indigenous population is

split into 573 federally recognized American Indian and Alaska Native tribes and villages (U.S Department of the Interior, n.d.). However, many individuals who identify as AI/NA are affiliated with a tribe but do not live on tribal lands. The total population in the United States during the same period was 316,515,021 and the population of individuals who identify as white alone was 232,943,055 (U.S Census Bureau, 2017). This same data set from the Census Bureau estimated that 50.5 percent of the AI/AN population is female, and 50.53 percent of the white only population is female (2017). To put these numbers in perspective, 1.68 percent of the total United States population is represented by AI/AN and 73.60 percent of the population identifies as white alone.

The state of South Dakota and the women that live within the state are of special interest in this review due to the fact that the authors of this paper are all residents of the state. In South Dakota, the American Indian population is a much larger percentage of the total population than what is seen in the national as a whole. Using the same 2011-2015 estimates used for the United States' data, 86,811 individuals in South Dakota identify as AI/AN alone or in combination with one or more other races (U.S Census Bureau, 2017). This constitutes almost 10.3 percent of the total population of the state, which is a much larger than the entire country's composition of 1.68 percent. Furthermore, nine of the current 573 federally recognized tribes share geography with South Dakota. All nine of the tribes have physical land that is organized into nine separate reservations in the state (see Appendix A). Each of these tribes represents a unique culture with their own history, customs, and governmental structure.

The caveat to understanding population estimates of different racial and ethnic groups, especially Native Americans, is that some data sets composed by the Census

Bureau are organized by single race only. That is, the groups that are detailed consist of American citizens that identify as one racial or ethnic group. Therefore, this can become a problem when a citizen identifies as two or more groups. Depending on the questions asked by the Census Bureau on a population estimate survey the total number of Native Americans that are accounted for in the census could be skewed, and even more so if they do not live on federally recognized tribal lands. This limitation also impacts any other survey that relies on using population estimates and could be detrimental if studies do not have a homogenous way of classifying American Indian populations.

The National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey (NISVS) was completed in 2011 and gathered data on experiences of sexual violence, stalking, and intimate partner violence in the male and female populations in the United States. Results from this survey have produced several estimates about violence against women such as:

- 19.3% of women report being a victim of rape during their lifetime.
- 15.2% of women have been a victim of stalking in their lifetime.
- 43.9% of women have experienced a form of sexual violence, other than rape, in their lifetime. (Breiding, et al., 2014)

These statistics are shocking in and of themselves, but they are more troubling when compared to numbers from a study released in 2000. The Department of Justice's National Survey of Violence of Women published in 2000 found that 17.6% of women were the victim of rape and 8.1% of women reported being stalked (Tjaden & Thoennes, 2000). If these reports are accurate, the rate of these types of violence have risen in the last decade.

Looking at violence against women under a racial lens, racial minorities often report sexual violence at higher rates. American Indian/Alaska Native women were more likely than any other racial group to report being a victim of sexual violence or stalking (Tjaden & Thoennes, 2000) As reported by the NISVS, looking at the same three areas of violence, they are experienced by Native American women in larger percentages:

- 27.5% of AI/AN women report being a victim of rape during their lifetime.
- 24.5% have been a victim of stalking in their lifetime.
- 55.0% have experienced a form of sexual violence, other than rape, in their lifetime. (Breiding, et al., 2014)

This specific survey, like all surveys, has its strengths, weaknesses, and limitations.

Because the report was compiled by the Department of Justice, which is an authority on reliable research, it should be considered trustworthy. However, looking at surveys from similar time periods investigating similar acts of violence the statistics can be biased depending on how the data was collected. Other published governmental reports have different estimates of the violence perpetrated against Native American women. For example, another Department of Justice report, Violence Against American Indian and Alaskan Native Women and Men, reported that 4 in 5 Native American women have experienced violence in their lifetime (Rosay, 2016). This would indicate that approximately 80 percent of women have survived violence, but this reported statistic includes multiple forms of violence beyond simply sexual violence. However, knowing that abuse, especially abuse as a child, is an indicator of future victimization is important in understanding why Native American women experience sexual violence at such high

rates. Physical and psychological aggression against AI/AN women is beyond the scope of this project but also deserves further investigation.

Another factor of interest in violence against American Indian women is who perpetrates these crimes against them. It has been found that 86 percent of survivors in reported sexual violence cases involving AI/AN women report that their attackers were non-Native American men (Amnesty International, 2007). In contrast, the majority of instances of sexual violence reported by other races are committed by perpetrators of their own race (Amnesty International, 2007). More information is needed to better understand if changes in prosecution of both Native American and non-Native American perpetrator of sexual violence could impact violence against American Indian women.

Not only are AI/AN women being victimized at higher rates in the context of sexual violence, there is another important aspect of the violence against indigenous women in the United States and surrounding countries. The number of women officially reported missing to authorities or that are missing but not recorded is troubling.

According to the National Crime Information Center, which is a division of the FBI, there were 85,459 active missing person's reports at the end of 2018 (NCIC, 2018). During this same year, 9,914 individuals who were classified as the race 'Indian' were included in the report as a missing person (NCIC, 2018). However, this report does not contain any information about resolved cases by race, therefore no assumptions can be made about the number of active cases that were not investigated further.

The issue of lack of reporting in missing person cases involving AI/AN women has been examined in special reports, like the "Missing and Murdered Indigenous



Women & Girls” report developed by the Urban Indian Health Institute. In this report it was mentioned that the National Crime Information Center reported that there were 5,712 reports of missing AI/AN women and girls in the United States in 2016. However, only 116 of these reports were logged in into NamUs, the US Department of Justice’s federal missing persons database (Urban Indian Health Institute, 2016). As of January 2020, there are 164 cases of missing AI/AN women that can be accessed on NamUs, which includes six cases originating in South Dakota (NamUS, 2020).

Another environment that is important to examine when considering crimes perpetrated against women are those formed by the introduction of a new industry to a region. Specifically, extractive industries, that is industries that involve the removal of non-renewable materials (e.g. oil, gas) from the earth, lead to the formation of temporary communities or “boom towns” that draw large amounts of predominantly male workers (TIP Office, 2015). Boom towns are often formed in inaccessible or remote areas of the country where enforcement of the law is difficult (TIP Office, 2015). The influx of male workers and inability to effectively police the area can create a climate that has a high demand for the sex trade or other violence. For example, the Bakken formation in North Dakota near the Fort Berthold Indian reservation was discovered in 2010 and produces 1.1 million barrels of oil a day (Finn, Gajda, Perrin, Fredericks, 2016). The rapid development of this oil industry in this area has resulted in a reported 75 percent increase in reported sexual assaults perpetrated against women near the Fort Berthold reservation (Finn, et al., 2016).

The prevalence of violence against women in the United States has been shown to be a topic that needs more investigation. Many of the studies referenced in this chapter

did not give a definitive reason for the increased rates of victimization seen in minority women. One survey by the U.S. Department of Justice stated that data on the victimization of Native Americans is limited and the factors involved in the increased rate of violence could be related to demographics, environment, or social influence (Tjaden & Thoennes, 2000). However, a common thread seen in many reports concerning sexual assault is the stressing of the need for further research into potential causative factors for the high rates of violence against minority women.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **Impact on the Women**

The impact of sexual assault and other forms of violence against Native American women can take a toll on the mental, physical, and financial health of the individual woman, her family, and the community in which she lives. The victimization of women is also a larger public health problem and a financial burden for individual states and the United States as a whole. Understanding the impact that sexual assault can have on Native Americans is important for moving toward healing for survivors but is also critical for the protection of Native Americans through policy change at the federal and state levels.

Through assorted studies conducted in the United States, sexual assault has been found to drastically impact the health of survivors. For example, the physical health of survivors can be altered in both the short and long term. The immediate consequences of sexual abuse including trauma such as cuts, broken bones, sexual transmitted infections (STIs), and genital injury. In fact, between 50 and 90 percent of survivors may suffer from genital tearing and between 5 and 30 percent of rape survivors contract a STI as a result of the abuse (Basile & Smith, 2011). Unwanted pregnancy resulting from rape can change a woman's life forever and have serious psychological and financial ramifications regardless if the fetus is carried to term. Untreated STIs can also have long lasting

repercussions and can lead to pelvic inflammatory disease, which is a major cause of infertility (Basile & Smith, 2011).

The mental/psychological health of survivors can be less visible than their physical health, but this aspect is still an important measure of well-being. The immediate distress felt by survivors of sexual violence can include fear, anxiety, and social withdrawal (Yuan, Koss, & Stone, 2006). Moreover, victims frequently report low self-esteem, insomnia, shame, and problems with sexual functioning (Basile & Smith, 2011). Unfortunately, these psychological traumas are not limited to short-lived feelings. In a meta-analysis of the linkage between sexual assault and psychiatric disorders, it was found that there is a significant association between sexual abuse and a lifetime diagnosis of anxiety, depression, eating disorders, posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), sleep disorders, and suicide attempts (Chen, et al., 2010). Chen and colleagues also found that the associations that had been found endured regardless of the age at which the abuse occurred or the sex of the survivor (2010).

The extent that sexual violence impacts the survivor's relationships and social interactions is not fully known. However, it is highly likely that the psychological consequences of sexual violence such as anxiety and social withdrawal could negatively impact a survivor's ability to navigate new relationships and maintain existing ones. Support from social groups has been shown to influence the recovery of survivors, as one would expect. However, negative social support, not positive, has been found to be the most influential response to survivor's healing (Basile & Smith, 2011). That is, negative social support after the disclosure of rape has been shown to encourage the development of maladaptive coping behaviors in the survivor (Basile & Smith, 2011). Negative effects

are not limited to social interactions and can extend into the workplace. Rape has been found to influence functioning in the workplace and can decrease productivity for eight months after the initial experience (Basile & Smith, 2011).

The symptoms experienced by victimized women do improve over time. However, they remain elevated for an upward of two years following an event of rape as compared to non-victimized women, and for some women, the symptoms of sexual assault are experienced chronically (Yuan, Koss, & Stone, 2006). The main body of research that has investigated the association between sexual assault and negative health outcomes in survivors has been conducted using predominantly Caucasian participants. It has been suggested that there may be differences in the effects felt by white versus ethnic or racial minorities, with minority groups reporting more significant levels of psychological distress (Yuan, Koss, & Stone, 2006). More research must therefore be conducted to study the experiences felt by minority groups to fully understand the true consequences of sexual violence.

The monetary burden of rape in the U.S. calculated by researchers in 2017 found that there are many factors involved in the costs associated with sexual assault. These factors include the associated medical costs, loss of work productivity costs, and the cost of legal fees in the event that the crime was reported and prosecuted. Looking at rape only, the estimated lifetime economic burden was \$122,461 per-victim (Peterson, DeGue, Florence, & Lokey, 2017). The authors of this specific analysis also reported that the costs associated with all reported rapes in the United States would be calculated at approximately \$3.1 trillion (Peterson, DeGue, Florence, & Lokey, 2017). However, the methodology of this analysis does not consider many factors that are true of experiences

of sexual assault, especially those seen in the Native American population, so the actual lifetime financial burden may be higher. For example, this analysis only calculated costs from reported cases of rape and it is known that approximately 63 percent of completed rapes, 65 percent of attempted rapes, and 74 percent of completed or attempted sexual assaults against women are not reported to the police (Rennison, 2002). This report only examined rapes and did not consider the impact that other forms of sexual assault or stalking had on women. It is also impossible to put a monetary value on the nonphysical consequences of rape and other forms of sexual assault. The pain and suffering experienced by a woman are intangible but can still hinder her life, nonetheless.

To ease the impact that sexual violence has on the well-being of survivors, resources are available to address the diverse needs of those who have been victimized. In the United States resources for survivors of violence vary in efficacy and cost depending on the location and type of victimization. Federal resources available over the phone includes the National Sexual Violence Hotline that provides counseling, referrals for local shelters and medical facilities, and information on laws or medical concerns. The National Center for Victims of Crime (NCVC) also provides resources to individuals that have been a victim of a crime. The National Indigenous Women's Resource Center (NIWRC) offers resources that are specific to preventing and responding to sexual violence perpetrated against Native American women and their children.

The federal government also funds in-person services specifically for Native Americans. Indian Health Services (IHS), a federal organization, is one of the principal health care providers for AI/AN individuals. Still, services are not always accessible for individuals living many miles from a facility. IHS facilities are also often underfunded

and understaffed, with the average IHS facility being 40 years old (Bachman, Zaykowski, Kallmyer, Poteyeva, & Lanier, 2008). It is also not always assured that victims of sexual violence will be able to access an IHS facility in the event of an emergency and, more so, an estimated 44 percent of the facilities lack trained personnel to provide emergency services in the event of sexual violence (Amnesty International, 2007). IHA has protocols in place for sexual assault, but the protocols are not mandatory, and a 2005 survey found that 30 percent of facilities did not have a protocol in place for emergency sexual assault services (Amnesty International, 2007). The lack of resources available for survivors at IHS facilities can be avoided, as IHS does help pay for select services provided at non-IHS facilities (Bachman, et al., 2008). However, survivors would still have to be able to find a way to travel and these facilities would not necessarily offer culturally competent care (Bachman, et al., 2008).

South Dakota has resources available for women struggling after a violent event and some of these services are specifically targeted to help Native American women in the state. For example, the White Buffalo Calf Women's Society located on the Rosebud Indian Reservation was the first shelter opened on tribal lands (Bachman, et al., 2008). According to the White Buffalo Calf Women's Society Facebook page (n.d.), the organization is "committed to providing shelter and advocacy for individuals victimized by violence. [They] recognize the necessity of a multi-faceted approach –the need to develop an effective response to systems in our community such as health, criminal justice, and other institutions that minimize violence against woman" (p.1). Other organizations that focus on assisting Native American women in the state include the

Native Women's Society of the Great Plains and Sacred Circle: National Resource Center to End Violence Against Native Women.

Spiritual healing is part of Native American culture that has been revitalized in recent years. Assimilation practices enforced by the U.S. government made American Indian traditional religions illegal and the legalization of ceremonies and spiritual teaching was not official until 1978 (U.S. National Library of Medicine, 2015).

American Indian tribes are now able to legally hold various ceremonies that their ancestors have passed down for the healing of the entire body. The inipi, or sweat lodge, is utilized as a spiritual healing ceremony but it can also be important for physical and emotional restoration (Brave Heart & DeBruyn, 1998). These ceremonies can function as opportunities for individuals to feel closer to their families and communities as well as pray for their own individual healing (Brave Heart & DeBruyn, 1998). Incorporating this type of spiritual care into traditional healthcare may be way to help Native Americans heal as both individuals and as a community.

Sexual violence negatively impacts the lives of victims for days, weeks, months, and potentially years after the initial instance of violence. The effects are not only physical, some of the wounds from sexual violence are more than surface deep. Emotional distress and psychological disorders can result from occurrences of rape and other forms of sexual violence. Starting to heal from experiences of sexual violence is possible with increased availability of services for survivors, but true healing of Native American populations will not occur until the issue of violence is addressed and mitigated. Understanding why Native American women are victimized more heavily than any other racial minority is one of the first steps toward this process of healing.



## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **Representation in Media**

Factors that influence why American Indian women are victimized at higher rates than other ethnic groups are diverse. These factors could be related to social, environmental, or demographic issues that have not been fully developed. One potential component of this complicated problem is the way that both women and Native Americans are represented in the media. Mass media is highly consumed in the United States, 98.9% of American households own a television (Leavitt, Covarrubias, Perez, & Fryberg, 2015), and the average American spends five hours and fifteen minutes watching television (Tukachinsky, Mastro, & Yarchi, 2015). Television, especially prime-time television is a staple in many Americans' lives and changes how people view the world around them. The influence of the internet, social media, and video games has also risen in the past decade.

Diversity in mass media, in all forms, is vital, because media has the power to “form, change, and reinforce stereotypes” (Monk-Turner, Heiserman, Johnson, Cotton, & Jackson, 2010). This ability of media to influence the perceptions held by consumers could fortify either positive or negative stereotypes depending on the quantity and quality of minority representation seen in media. This is worrisome because several studies have found that racial minority groups are generally negatively stereotyped in television appearances (Mastro & Robinson, 2000, as cited in Monk-Tuner, et al., 2010). Even if

television does not have the ability to form new stereotypes it has been found that television imagery helped to validate existing stereotypes by giving them more credibility (Berg, 1990, as cited in Monk-Turner, et al., 2010).

Women and Native Americans are two minority groups that have been especially stereotyped in the media. More so, the most common stereotypes depicted on television of these two groups are of a negative connotation. For example, compared to men, women are more likely to be sexually objectified on television (Tukachinsky, et al., 2015). Depicting women as sexual objects could potentially be a factor in normalizing sexual violence against women. Women who are members of another minority group (e.g. racial, ethnic, sexual orientation, gender identity) must manage the expectations that come with being members of multiple stereotyped groups. Because racial stereotypes are typically negative, the portrayal of female racial minorities is overall both negative and sexually charged. This stereotype has been found in the United States, and in an analysis of television content women of color were represented as over sexualized and less professional than other characters (Tukachinsky, et al., 2015).

Stereotyping of American Indians is prevalent and often misrepresents their true lifestyles. Native Americans are not typically depicted as modern figures in media and are instead shown as 18<sup>th</sup> or 19<sup>th</sup> century characters (Leavitt, et al., 2015). These depictions are often from movies and television shows of the 'Western' genre. In these programs Native Americans are usually represented as criminals that battle cowboys or savages needing help from educated white men. Both of these scenarios show white Eastern Europeans in a superior position to the Native American population. There is also a history of Native American characters being portrayed by white actors which further

underscores the power difference between the two racial groups in the media. As recently as 2013, the primarily white actor Johnny Depp played Tonto, a Native American character, in the movie “The Lone Ranger”.

Unfortunately, when indigenous populations are shown in a more modernized setting there are still many unfavorable connotations associated with their appearance. Native American characters, whether they are portrayed by Native American actors or not, are depicted as poor, uneducated, and susceptible to addiction (Fryberg, Markus, Oyserman, & Stone, 2008). This representation of Native Americans means that they are often excluded from many careers and public settings that other races are found in on television. Because they are depicted as uneducated, AI/AN individuals are not portrayed in schools or in professional job settings (Leavitt, et al., 2015). This type of misrepresentation could lead television consumers to believe that Native Americans are not doctors, teachers, lawyers, and other vital professions in society.

These negative stereotypes have the ability to impact the public’s understanding of Native Americans as a unique group of people. Many Americans have no daily interactions with individuals that identify as Native American. Only fourteen states have a Native American population of greater than 100,000 (Leavitt, et al., 2015). These small indigenous population sizes in many states make it less likely that the general public will encounter someone from a Native American tribe that will oppose the stereotypes that are shown on television. To make visibility more difficult, many AI/AN individuals that live in the continental United States live on tribal lands.

Television isn't the only source of misrepresentation; internet searches are also likely to show outdated imagery of Native Americans. An analysis of Google and Bing image search results showed that 95.5% of Google and 99% of Bing images were historical representation of indigenous populations (Leavitt, et al., 2015). This once again shows the lack of representation of Native Americans as a modern people that belong in public spheres like schools.

Native Americans have been so severely under portrayed in primetime television that they are often not included in quantitative analyses. In fact, a recent content analysis that included many minority groups, found that Native Americans constitute between 0.0 and 0.4 percent of characters seen on primetime television (Tukachinsky, et al., 2015). This study was conducted by evaluating primetime television over a twenty-year span, which shows just how enduring this underrepresentation is. The overarching lack of depiction also means that there is a lack of diversity in the Native American identities that are presented in the media. There are over 500 federally recognized tribes in the United States that represent over 500 distinct cultural backgrounds. If only 0.4 percent of characters, at most, are depicted as Native American, there is severe homogenization of the hundreds of Native American nations (Tukachinsky, et al., 2015).

Representation of minority groups in the media can also impact how members of these groups view themselves. Limited and inaccurate portrayals of indigenous groups help to reinforce the "homogenization of identity, development of identity prototypes, and deindividualization and self-stereotyping of contemporary Native Americans" (Leavitt, et al., 2015, pg. 44). As stated previously, there is a severe homogenization of the hundreds of unique American Indian tribes due to the near invisibility of Native

Americans in the media. This drastically limits how indigenous groups are perceived to look and act, even more so when many media portrayals of the groups are in a historical context (e.g. living in teepees, wearing buckskin dresses and loincloths). This limits identity exploration by modern American Indians because it is suggested that they belong in spheres only characterized by common stereotypes (Leavitt, et al., 2015).

Identity prototypes are seen as the best example of a certain group by mainstream society. Psychologically, representing the typical prototype of one's group translates to a higher in-group status (Rubin, 2012, as cited in Leavitt, et al., 2015). This would make it more salient for individuals to be prototypical of their group. Because many of the stereotypes of Native Americans that are pervasive in society are restricted and negative (e.g. poor, uneducated, prone to addiction), trying to fit into these expectations can have an adverse impact on how Native Americans feel they need to act to belong in their group. In contrast, non-prototypical individuals hold lower group status, have more negative feelings, are less visible, and are more anxious about fitting in with their group (Leavitt, et al., 2015). Therefore, challenging conventional stereotypes about their Native American heritage can be distressing for individuals that are growing up with an American Indian identity.

In a series of four studies, researchers were interested in understanding how representations of Native Americans (e.g. American Indian sports mascots) can impact Native American students' sense of self. Fryberg and her colleagues (2008) found that imagery of common American Indian symbols was associated with the students reporting "depressed state self-esteem and community worth, and fewer achievement-related possible selves" (pg. 208). The studies also noted that the reported associations with the

various images were primarily positive. This means that even though the students did not necessarily view the American Indian symbols as negative, the images still were able to negatively impact the participants' self-concept. This may show that any common stereotypes of American Indians will be detrimental to the health and well-being of young American Indians; the authors of these studies postulate that the negative sense of self is caused because "they [American Indian mascots] remind American Indians of the limited ways others see them and, in this way, constrain how they see themselves" (Fryberg, et al., 2008, pg. 208). Young Native Americans self-stereotype and are de-individualized because of the strict identity constraints that are imposed upon them by the general public and media portrayals of their race.

The lack of visibility of Native Americans in the media has a negative impact on the mental well-being of modern American Indians. American Indian women are members of two minority groups and learn to model their behavior, in part, from common stereotypes depicted in the media. The negative impact of these stereotypes is not yet well defined and could have more pervasive effect on the behavior of Native Americans and society at large. Overall, stereotyping and media representation could be a factor in the higher rates of victimization seen in Native American women as compared to any other racial group. Many racial groups are negatively stereotyped, but Native Americans face an unprecedented invisibility in media that drastically limits their ability to breach domains of society that they are not seen in commonly.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **History of Trauma**

Indigenous populations in the Americas and throughout the world were subject to colonization for many generations. The colonization of these groups in the Americas, mainly by Eastern Europeans, often resulted in the destruction of their natural way of life. Their culture, language, and families were all negatively impacted. In fact, the American Indian population estimates range from 2.8 to 5.7 million before 1492 and the “discovery” of North America (Koch, Brierley, Maslin, Lewis, 2019). After this period, the population size fell drastically, the next estimate was one million in 1800 (Koch, et al., 2019). The United States census reported the American Indian population as numbering 237,196 in 1900 (Johansson, 1982). Smallpox and measles alone, sometimes purposely introduced to vulnerable indigenous populations by Europeans, destroyed an estimated 90 percent of Native American populations (Sotero, 2006). The impact that initial European colonization and the subsequent policies enacted by the United States government had on AI/AN populations is often described as historical trauma.

Historical trauma is an ambiguous term, but one author defines it as the “collective complex trauma inflicted on a group of people who share a specific group identity...the legacy of numerous traumatic events a community experiences over generations and encompasses the psychological and social responses to such events” (Evans-Campbell, 2008). The impact that the vicious cycle of historical trauma can have

on the modern Native American population will be described in more detail later, but the graph below can show how this cycle influences the health and wellness of AI/AN individuals today.

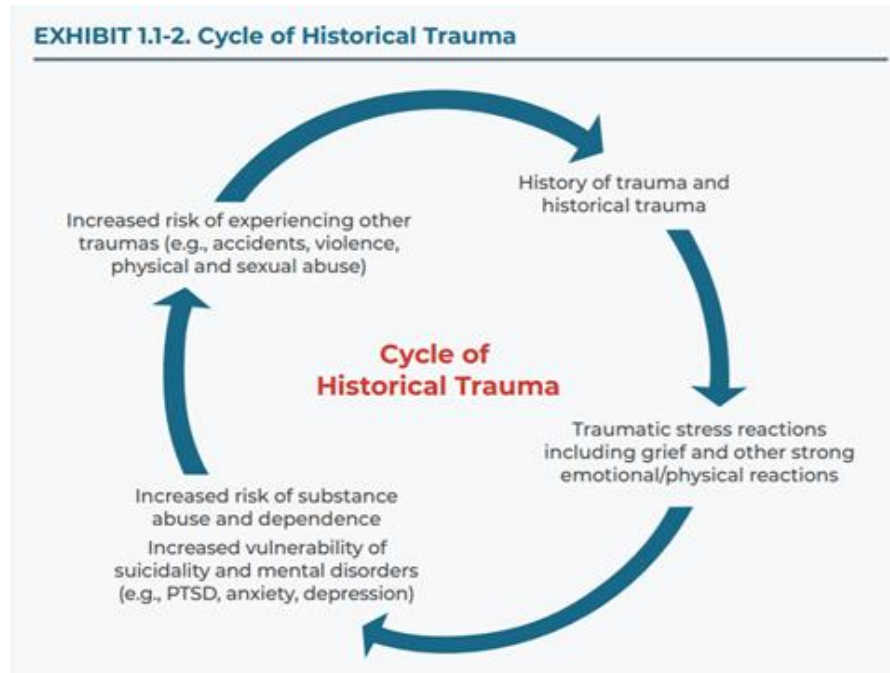


Chart courtesy of the U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services. (From SAMHSA. (2019). Behavioral Health Services for American Indians and Alaska Natives: For Behavioral Health Service Providers, Administrators, and Supervisors. TIP 61. HHS Publication No. (SMA) 18-5070)

**Figure 1:** The cycle of historical trauma displays how historical trauma can be perpetuated through a cycle of stress reactions and exposure to other forms of trauma.

Brave Heart and DeBruyn (1998) and others (Whitbeck, Adams, Hoyt, & Chen, 2004; Evans-Campbell, 2008) have argued that treatment of early American Indians by colonizers meets the definition of genocide and this “ethnic cleansing” is one source of the historical trauma that has persisted for multiple generations. Genocide is a term used in international law and was officially defined in 1948 in the United Nation’s Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide. This convention confirms that genocide is a crime and should be punished under international law. Genocide is defined in two parts according to the convention, one of which is a mental element and



the other is a physical element. The mental element consists of the “intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group” (UN General Assembly, 1948). The physical aspect of the definition is composed of the following five acts:

- (a) Killing members of the group;
  - (b) Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group;
  - (c) Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part;
  - (d) Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group;
  - (e) Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group
- (UN General Assembly, 1948, p. 277).

The definition of genocide and the resulting obligation to prosecute those offending this international law can be ambiguous. In part because being able to definitively establish the mental aspect of genocide can be difficult. However, the five elements of the physical definition of genocide are easier to understand and objectively document. In the following paragraphs, these five elements will be briefly outlined regarding acts perpetrated against the indigenous peoples by the United States government as well as evidence of the lasting impact of these acts.

Early interactions between Europeans and Native Americans completely changed the indigenous way of life. The annihilation of the population through disease, military conflict, and long marches to reservation lands without adequate supplies highlight several acts of “bodily harm” and the killing of members of the indigenous groups. The slaughter of indigenous people at the Wounded Knee Massacre in 1890 is a specific example of physical violence. This massacre was additionally mentally damaging due to

the burial of the slain in mass graves without traditional burial practices (Brave Heart & DeBruyn, 1998). The reservation systems also became a mental and physical symbol of oppression by which tribal groups were forced to leave their homelands to live in restricted areas (Brave Heart & DeBruyn, 1998). Early reservations are described as “large concentration camps” (Whitbeck, et. al., 2004), with Native populations dependent on the government for food, medicine, and lodging; leaving reservation lands was illegal; and traditional ways of life were illegal or not feasible on the new lands (Whitbeck, et. al., 2004). These conditions are another key component of genocide: “deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part” as defined by the United Nations.

Later in the history of the colonization of American Indians policies were enacted by the U.S. government to “[impose] measures intended to prevent births within the group”. In 1976 the government admitted to the unauthorized sterilization of Native American women with an estimated 3,406 women sterilized without their consent between 1973 and 1976 (Lawrence, 2000). The practice was so widespread that it is thought that at least one in four American Indian women between the ages of fifteen and forty-four were sterilized without their consent during the late 1960s and early 1970s (Lawrence, 2000). These procedures were often performed by physicians employed by Indian Health Services (IHS) without explaining to the woman the risks of the procedure, waiting for the proper wait time after the signing of consent forms, or not obtaining consent at all. There are also reports from that time of American Indian women being coerced to sign sterilization consent forms while under heavy sedation after giving birth via cesarean or being told that a hysterectomy (the total removal of the uterus) was

reversible, which it is not (Lawrence, 2000). These practices existed for several decades and are an underlying factor of many Native American's distrust of the American government and IHS.

The fifth physical act of genocide, “forcibly transferring children of the group to another” was seen by the formation of boarding schools for American Indian children from the 1800s through the early 1900s. Boarding schools were formed by the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) to teach children the values and language of the dominant culture; attendance was voluntary at first, though by 1890 it was mandatory (Brave Heart & DeBruyn, 1998). These schools functioned as an agent of assimilation and negatively impacted American Indian children, their families, and their communities for years. Children were moved to schools in different states, beaten if they spoke their native language, and many died from disease or abuse (Brave Heart & DeBruyn, 1998). The consequences of the boarding school policies are thought to be intergenerational as well. Children raised in boarding schools were deprived of traditional parental role models and shown through policy that the American government did not believe that American Indian families were fit to raise children (Evans-Campbell, 2008) More so, the literature proposes that traumatic boarding school experiences may have interrupted the process of intergenerational transmission of healthy child-rearing practices and introduced new, negative behaviors (Horejsi et al., 1992, as cited by Evans-Campbell, 2008).

Another instance where the United States government removed American Indian children from their biological families in an attempt to further assimilate these children into mainstream culture was seen in the Indian Adoption Project. This program was operated from 1959 to 1967 by a collaboration of the United States Children's Bureau,

the Bureau of Indian Affairs, and the Child Welfare League of America (Palmiste, 2011). The project was seen by some as a way to decrease racial tensions between white Americans and American Indians, but others, especially those still traumatized from the boarding school era saw it as the U.S. government attempting to further destroy Native American culture. Over the course of the project 395 children were officially relocated to predominantly non-Native households, but the true number of children that were displaced is estimated to be 12,486 (Palmiste, 2011). The Indian Child Welfare Act of 1978 was passed by Congress in an attempt to stop this widespread removal of American Indian children from their biological families (Palmiste, 2011). However, the removal of children from their birth homes could be another factor in the interruption of the transmission of health child-rearing practices that was mentioned previously.

The impact of this proposed genocide and historical trauma has been more heavily researched in recent years. This impact is also being considered when governmental and other groups collaborate with American Indians. For example, governmental disaster responders are trained to consider how historical trauma can change the response of American Indians in the event of a disaster. The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), which is an agency of the U.S Department of Health and Human Services has recognized that the effects of historical trauma on Native Americans are widespread and can include, but are not limited to the following: alcohol and other substance abuse, a breakdown of traditional family values, depression, anxiety, suicide, child abuse or neglect, domestic violence, posttraumatic stress disorder, internalized oppression, self-hatred, and generalized loss of meaning or sense of hope (2014). This resource also emphasized that historical trauma has had a profound impact

on the structure of Native American communities and instilled a deep mistrust of outsiders and government officials (SAMHSA, 2014).

As stated previously, historical trauma is an intergenerational wound that continues to impact generations far removed from the original trauma. The means of transmission are varied and can employ biological, psychosocial, or economic processes, as can be seen in the graph below. For example, it has been found that emotional and physical trauma can impact genetic functioning that may be passed to successive generations as can specific disorders such as PTSD, depression, other forms of mental illness (Sotero, 2006). Transmission of trauma also occurs inadvertently from the shared collection of memories that elders pass to their offspring through oral traditions of storytelling (Sotero, 2006). American Indian youth may also learn maladaptive behaviors by imitating their immediate or extended family. Sotero (2006) proposes that these behaviors like substance abuse, physical and sexual abuse, or suicide directly traumatize the youth and direct their future actions. This cycle of abuse and trauma exposes new generations to the legacy of the historical trauma as well as introducing new, modern trauma that perpetuates the cycle.

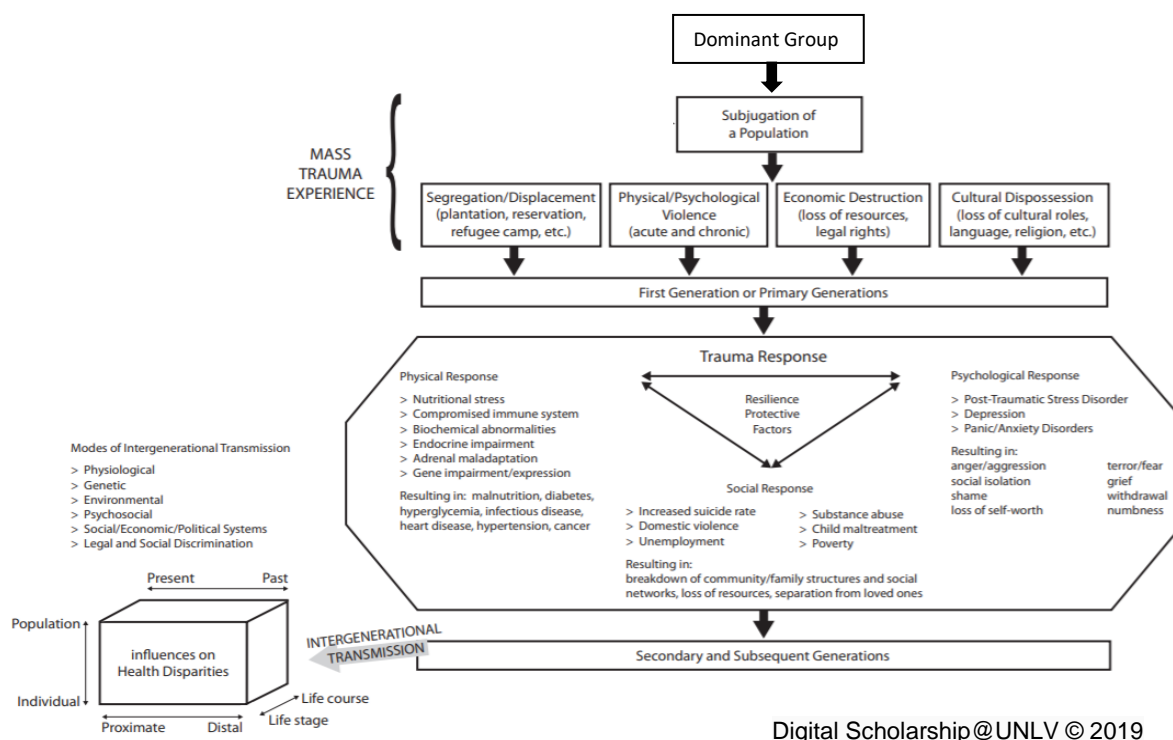


Chart adapted from Sotero, M. (2006). Journal of Health Disparities Research and Practice, 1(1), 93–108.

**Figure 2:** A proposed conceptual model of historical trauma that details the transmission of trauma from the primary generation to subsequent generations.

This cycle of abuse and trauma impacts American Indians from an early age and the negative outcomes associated of these experiences can be potentially understood using the framework of adverse childhood experiences (ACEs). Research on the correlation between ACEs and negative health outcomes later in life are finding that early life trauma can have chronic effects on an individual's life. For example, it has been found that early trauma can increase the risk for experiencing violence across the lifespan compounded with poorer health and social outcomes (Ports, Ford, & Merrick, 2016). According to Kenny and Singh (2016), of the nine ACEs they studied, AI/AN children are more like to experience eight of the experiences than their non-Hispanic White

counterparts. These eight experiences included, but were not limited to, domestic violence, household substance abuse, and parental incarceration (Kenny & Singh, 2016). American Indian children also reported experiencing multiple ACEs at high rates (Kenny & Singh, 2016). Not surprisingly, the correlation between an ACE and sexual violence later in life has been thought to be strong; one study found that individuals with one ACE have a 1.77 times greater risk of adulthood sexual victimization than those with no reported ACEs (Ports, Ford, & Merrick, 2016). When the number of reported ACEs increases to five or more, the risk jumps to 8.32 times greater than those with no ACEs (Ports, Ford, & Merrick, 2016).

Modern and historical trauma have had a negative impact on both the physical and mental health of modern American Indians. Sotero (2006) argues that Native Americans have never recovered from their history of trauma and suffer from the most severe health disparities found in any racial group in the United States:

Compared to the U.S. average, American Indians are 770% more likely to die from alcoholism, 650% more likely to die from tuberculosis, 420% more likely to die from diabetes, 280% more likely to die from accidents, 190% more likely to commit suicide and 52% more likely to die from pneumonia or influenza. (p. 101)

While these statistics are from almost a decade ago, the disparities seen in AI/AN health have not been majorly diminished to levels comparable to white Americans. American Indians still have a life expectancy that is 5.5 years less than the national average (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Indian Health Service, 2019). They are still 660% more likely to die from alcoholism; 320% more likely to die from diabetes; 250%

more likely to die from accidents; 170% more likely to die by suicide; and 180% more likely to die from pneumonia or influenza (IHS, 2019).

A study conducted in 2009 explored the impact that being raised in an environment of historical trauma has on the depressive symptoms expressed by American Indian children. The authors of the study had previously found that thinking of historical loss had negative behavioral and emotional consequences (e.g. alcohol abuse and anger) among adults and were investigating whether these consequences could be passed to their offspring (Whitbeck, Walls, Johnson, Morrisseau, and McDougall, 2009). Surprisingly, not only were the sample group of 11-13-year-old adolescents reporting similar rates of daily thoughts of certain components of historical loss, in some instances, they reported higher rates than their female caretakers (Whitbeck, et al., 2009). Whitbeck, Walls, Johnson, Morrisseau, and McDougall (2009) found that adolescents' and adults' perceptions of historical loss were associated with internalizing symptoms which are also a known consequence of perceived discrimination. Yet, perceived discrimination is a reminder to an individual of their perceived place in the dominant society, instead of remembering historical loss reminds American Indians that they have no place in society. Pairing this with their near invisibility in media, young Native Americans are growing up in a society where they do not know how to belong.

The wound of historical trauma is impacting modern Americans and work in this field is vital for the healing of Native Americans in both their mental and physical health. The acknowledgment of these responses to both current and historical trauma are a step in the correct direction, but there is still much work to be done to understand the full extent of the issue as well as identifying opportunities for healing. Sexual violence and



the general predation of American Indian women may be mitigated, but it most certainly will not be fully resolved unless action is taken to heal the underlying factors of the issue. Historical trauma has been scientifically shown to increase internalizing behaviors as well as the prevalence of maladaptive behaviors such as substance abuse and physical/sexual abuse. All of these behaviors are known to influence the likelihood of an event of sexual assault.

## **CHAPTER SIX**

### **Policy & Education**

The role that mass media has in shaping public perceptions concerning minority groups of people was explored in a previous chapter (Chapter Four: Representation in Media). Correct representation of minority groups could have a major impact on the level of awareness that the general public has for issues facing these populations. However, the overall lack of awareness that the general public has concerning problems facing Native American populations goes beyond a lack of media coverage. The invisibility of Native American tribes and their people has been a systemic issue for decades; addressing sexual violence perpetrated against Native American women and other issues will require an integrated approach that includes the media, nonprofit organizations, the education system, as well as the governments of both tribes and the United States.

The online survey conducted by the authors had the explicit goal of gathering information to understand public perceptions of sexual violence in different populations of women as well as the importance of women reported missing. While the findings of the study will be discussed in more detail, it was found that many respondents didn't realize the extent of violence perpetrated against women in the U.S. The media outlets that the respondents cited as where they were obtaining current events information was often notably social media sites. Social media platforms may be sites where inaccurate

information is spread, but they could be utilized as a vehicle to bring attention to issues faced by AI/AN populations that aren't covered by traditional mass media productions.

Although tribes maintain their sovereignty, the United States' government is responsible for funding many programs available to Native American peoples. For example, IHS, the primary healthcare service for Native Americans, is a branch of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and receives funding from the federal budget. The introduction of new legislation is one way to both increase the awareness of issues facing AI/ANs while also upholding the responsibility that the government has toward tribes through their treaty and trust relationship. In recent years, funding to Native American programs has increased, but the spending is still below what is needed. In 2018 IHS spend \$4,078 per capita on healthcare expenses as opposed to the \$8,109 spent by Medicaid, \$10,692 by Veterans Affairs, and \$13,185 for Medicare (Garvin, 2019). Obviously, the healthcare provided to Native Americans is not properly funded and this is only one example of a lack of resources provided by the U.S. government.

One example of policy that is implemented to benefit Native Americans is through the addition of observances on certain days throughout the year. Congress is helping to bring awareness to the severity of issues Native American women face through the passing of the resolution that designates May 5<sup>th</sup> as "National Day of Awareness for Missing and Murdered Native Women and Girls" (National Indian Law Library, 2019). This observance is one step toward overcoming the relative invisibility of Native Americans in media. This resolution was enacted in memory of Hanna Harris, a Cheyenne woman who was murdered in 2013 and will continue to honor women and girls whose deaths have not been properly recognized (National Resource Center to

Enhance Safety of Native Women and their Children, 2017). Nearly 200 organizations, including many tribes, supported this resolution and participation of this observance can be seen by individuals wearing red and using social media as a way to spread awareness (NIWRC, 2017).

Another example of policy changes that can be implemented at either the federal or state level are ones affecting public schools, both K-12 and post-secondary institutions. Many states do not currently require adequate coverage of Native American history in their public-school curriculums and this could be an excellent area of opportunity to increase the visibility of both the struggles and achievements made by historic and modern AI/ANs. Currently, 87 percent of states' K-12 curriculum standards do not mention Native American history after the year 1900 (National Congress of American Indians, 2019). More so, 27 states do not recognize a single Native American figure in their K-12 standards (National Congress of American Indians, 2019). The complete lack of education or lack of correct information at the K-12 level is further reinforced by misinformation concerning Native Americans in the media. Introducing material in the school system that is factual and encompasses a more complete timeline of Native American history could help impede the transmission of negative stereotypes and myths concerning AI/AN populations.

At the post-secondary education level, Native American studies have grown in numbers and in quality. These programs can be identified by several names including Native American studies, American Indian Studies, and First Nations Studies. Degrees in these areas of study examine the political issues, culture, history, and modern experiences of Native peoples (Association on American Indian Affairs, 2019). Understandably, these

programs are important for creating an inclusive and welcoming environment for AI/AN students on campus. However, Native American studies programs are not found in every college campus across the United States. Of the over 7,000 postsecondary title IV institutions in the U.S. (National Center for Education Statistics, 2019), only approximately 200 of these institutions offer a major, minor, or certificate in Native American or related studies (Association on American Indian Affairs, 2019).

Another aspect of integrating American Indian culture in at the collegiate level is seen in the Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs). The first tribal college was started in 1969 on the Navajo reservation (American Indian College Fund, n.d.). Now TCUs represent institutions where individuals can obtain a degree while also being immersed in a learning environment that is full of culture, language, and social support. South Dakota is currently home to three TCUs, Sinte Gleska University, Sisseton Wahpeton College, and Oglala Lakota College. The importance of these colleges has not been fully studied, but it is known that 86 percent of those enrolled in a TCU complete their program, but fewer than 10 percent of AI/AN students who transition from a reservation high school to a standard university finish their degree (U.S. Department of Education, n.d.)

Organizations advocating for Native Americans and, more specifically Native American women are another agent to increase the visibility of Native Americans and issues impacting this population. There are many nonprofit organizations like Association on American Indian Affairs and National Congress of American Indians that work to advocate for Native American culture and tribal sovereignty. Another organization, Women Empowering Women for Indigenous Nations works to educate others about issues facing Native American peoples and preserve the culture of these nations. Groups

such as these are vital, acting as lobbyists, to advocate for the broad interests of all Native American tribes at the federal level. Many bills introduced in Congress will have an impact on the Native American way of life and it is important that the United States government upholds its responsibilities toward Native American peoples and their tribes.

There is obviously a lack of awareness of issues facing Native Americans in the United States, and this is a pervasive problem that spans decades. Bringing awareness to the general public can be brought about through the implementation of several measures. Introduction of policy change at the governmental level and changes to the structure of public education are just two means that were proposed to bring Native Americans and their modern issues to the public's gaze. More Americans becoming concerned with conditions faced by AI/Ans there will be the first step toward a major call for change.

## **CHAPTER SEVEN**

### **Rationale**

The findings of the literature review revealed the importance of understanding the factors that underlay the high rates of violence perpetrated against AI/AN women. The review also found a lack of surveillance and dissemination regarding this specific topic as well as other issues concerning Native American individuals. Therefore, the authors of this review created a survey to better understand public awareness of areas of concern for women, with a specific interest in Native American women. Additionally, the survey determined respondents' perceived prevalence of missing women in the United States.

It was expected that the survey participants would have an increased awareness of issues concerning college campus assault and less knowledge on Native American victimization specifically. This belief was evaluated throughout the survey as were the participants self-reported awareness of current news topics and sources of this knowledge. The authors hope that individuals who took the survey were able to take the first steps toward becoming more aware of issues facing individuals that are virtually invisible in some forms of mass media. With increasing awareness of the lack of information concerning violence against minority group women as well as the factors that underlay instances of violence, more robust studies will need to be completed to better understand this multifaceted issue.

## **CHAPTER EIGHT**

### **Methods**

#### **Materials**

The survey was created de novo by the author and approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at the University of South Dakota. It was conducted online via Google Forms, an online data collection tool. The IRB approval can be found in Appendix B. Participants had to read and agree to an informed consent statement in the first section of the survey, which can be seen in Appendix C. All survey questions can be found in Appendix D.

The survey consisted of questions presented in three formats: scale, multiple choice, and free response. The questions in the scale format presented a series of statements and the respondents indicated to what extent they agreed with the five-point scale. Multiple choice questions provided a few choices and respondents selected the best answer(s) or indicated an option that was not included. Finally, the free response questions consisted of a prompt with a space to record an answer.

The second section of the survey asked questions concerning the demographics of the participants. These questions were utilized to gauge the age, racial/ethnic, and sex makeup of those who participated as well as their general self-reported knowledge of current news. This section also asked questions about the participants' news consumption (e.g. "Where do you get most of your news information?").



The next section was centered on the topics of sexual violence and missing women. Questions were posed asking about these two topics either perpetrated against a college-aged female or perpetrated against an AI/AN woman. The purpose of the second section was to assess the participants' awareness of the topics and level of concern that these topics prompted. This section also asked respondents if they knew of instances of these types of violence and, if so, where they learned of these situations. The summary of the questions asked in section 3 of the survey can be found in Table 1.

**Table 1:** Questions from Section 3 of the Online Survey

<b>Question Number</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Response Format</b>
Question 1	How large of a concern would you say sexual assault is on college campuses in the U.S.?	Scale Question: (1 to 5)
Question 2	Have you heard about a sexual assault on a college campus in the last year? If so, how did you hear about it?	Multiple Choice: (Different forms of media)
Question 3	How large of a concern would you say a missing female student would be on a college campus in the U.S.?	Scale Question (1 to 5)
Question 4	Have you heard about a missing woman on a college campus in the last year? If so, how did you hear about it?	Multiple Choice: (Different forms of media)
Question 5	How large of a concern would you say sexual assault is for women who identify as American Indian/Alaska Native in the U.S.?	Scale Question (1 to 5)

Question 6	Have you heard about a sexual assault of a American Indian/Alaska Native woman in the last year? If so, how did you hear about it?	Multiple Choice: (Different forms of media)
Question 7	How large of a concern would you say missing women who identify as American Indian/Alaska Native is in the U.S.?	Scale Question (1 to 5)
Question 8	Have you heard about a missing American Indian/Alaska Native woman in the last year? If so, how did you hear about it?	Multiple Choice: (Different forms of media)
Question 9	Have you heard of the abduction of Mollie Tibbetts? If so, how did you hear about it?	Multiple Choice: (Different forms of media)
Question 10	Have you heard of the search for Misty Upham? If so, how did you hear about it?	Multiple Choice: (Different forms of media)
Question 11	How many women do you think went missing from college campuses in the U.S. in the last ten years?	Short Answer
Question 12	How many women do you think went missing from Native American reservations in the U.S. in the last ten years?	Short Answer
Question 13	Additional Comments	Short Answer

## **Procedure**

The survey was distributed through various channels. These channels included email (e.g. the Health Sciences student listserv, University of South Dakota Honors Program weekly mailing) and social media (e.g. Facebook, Twitter). The survey was also showcased during the University of South Dakota's yearly showcase of student research, Ideafest, during a poster session.

The invitation to complete the survey was accompanied with a description of the survey's purpose, the estimated time needed to complete the survey, who is welcome to complete the survey, the link to the survey on Google Forms, as well as the contact information for the authors of the survey. No special knowledge or skillset was required to complete the survey, the only stipulation was that survey respondents must be eighteen years of age or older to complete the study. Once potential respondents followed the link to the Google Form containing a complete description of the survey and the informed consent page. Acceptance of the informed consent page was implied after the respondents chose "yes" in response to the statement "I have read and understand the previous information concerning my rights as a voluntary research participant" at the end of the informed consent page. No identifying data was collected from participants to ensure that all responses were anonymous.

## **CHAPTER NINE**

### **Results**

#### **Participants**

Participants were 129 individuals (108 females, 20 males, and one non-binary individual) who voluntarily completed the online survey. The only requirement to complete the survey was age, all respondents had to be age 18 or over. Many participants were between the ages of 18 and 24 ( $n=78$ ), but the range of included age categories covered the lifespan. A majority of those that participated identified as non-Hispanic white ( $n=120$ ), however there were several other racial or ethnic groups represented that can be seen in Table 2 below. Another category that was included in the demographic portion of the survey was academic standing (i.e. college student, graduate student, or neither). Table 2 describes the various demographic categories in more detail.

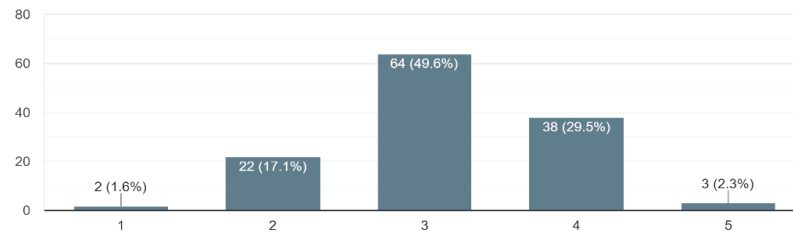
**Table 2-** Participant Demographics

	Number (n=129)	Percentage (%)
<b>Gender</b>		
Female	108	83.7
Male	20	15.5
Non-Binary (Agender/Gender-Variant)	1	0.8
<b>Age (years)</b>		
18-24	78	60.5
25-34	10	7.8
35-44	27	20.9
45-54	7	5.4
55-64	5	3.9
65 or over	2	1.6
<b>Ethnic/Racial Identity</b>		
Non-Hispanic white	120	93.0
Hispanic or Latino	4	3.1
Asian	3	2.3
American Indian or Alaska Native	6	4.7
Middle Eastern/Arab	1	0.8
<b>Academic Standing</b>		
Freshman (1 <sup>st</sup> year)	22	17.1
Sophomore (2 <sup>nd</sup> year)	16	12.4
Junior (3 <sup>rd</sup> year)	25	19.4
Senior (4 <sup>th</sup> year)	19	14.7
Graduate Student	5	3.9
Non-Student	42	32.6

## Survey Data

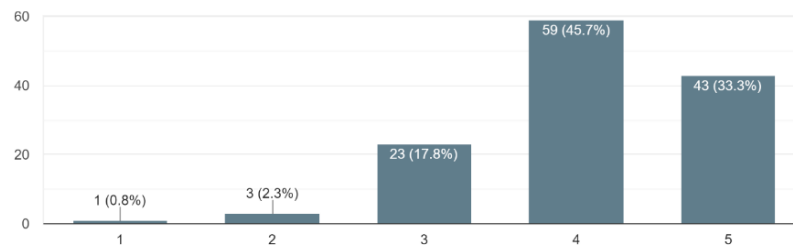
The final sample (n=129) (Table 2) responded to demographic questions followed by ten questions in either a scale or multiple-choice format that assessed their concern and knowledge of missing or endangered college or Native American women. Survey questions can be found in Appendix D and will be referenced using their section and questions numbers (e.g. S1:Q1). Figures 3 through 13 display the ten scale and multiple-choice format questions as well as one selected demographic question that was not discussed earlier.

How knowledgeable would you say you are on current news topics?  
129 responses



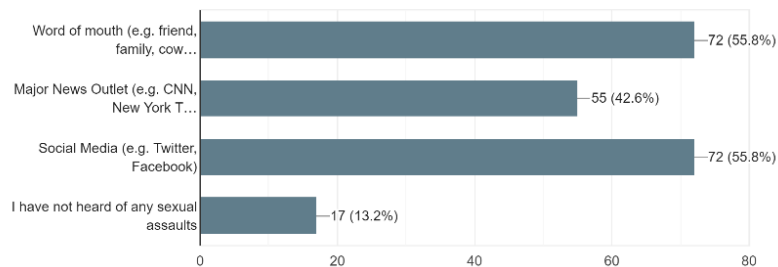
**Figure 3:** Responses to S2:Q5 displayed as both number and percentage.

How large of a concern would you say sexual assault is on college campuses in the U.S.?  
129 responses



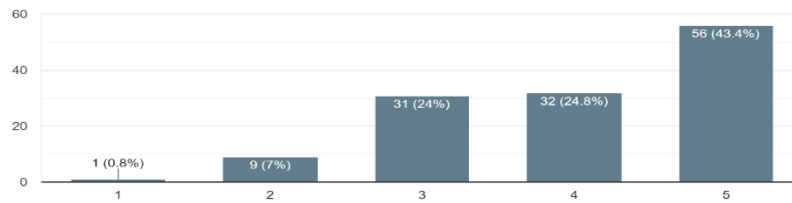
**Figure 4:** Responses to S3:Q1 displayed as both number and percentage.

Have you heard about a sexual assault on a college campus in the last year? If so, how did you hear about it?  
129 responses



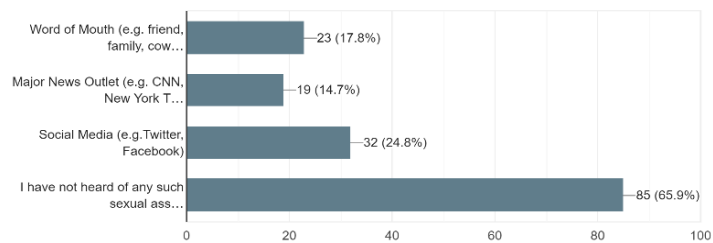
**Figure 5:** Responses to S3:Q2 displayed as both number and percentage.

How large of a concern would you say sexual assault is for women who identify as American Indian/Alaska Native in the U.S.?  
129 responses



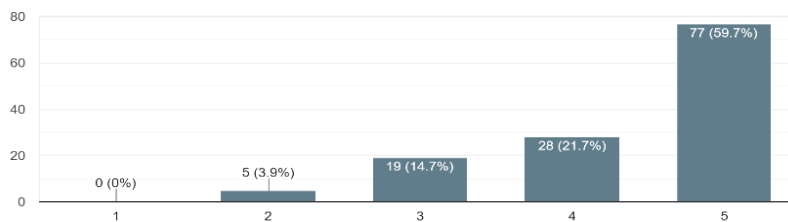
**Figure 6:** Responses to S3:Q5 displayed as both number and percentage.

Have you heard about a sexual assault of a American Indian/Alaska Native woman in the last year?  
If so, how did you hear about it?  
129 responses



**Figure 7:** Responses to S3:Q6 displayed as both number and percentage.

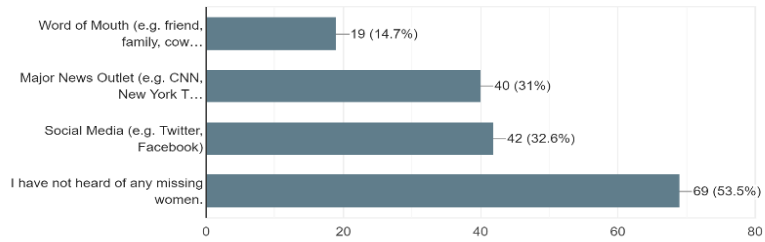
How large of a concern would you say a missing female student would be on a college campus in the U.S.?  
129 responses



**Figure 8:** Responses to S3:Q3 displayed as both number and percentage.

Have you heard about a missing woman on a college campus in the last year? If so, how did you hear about it?

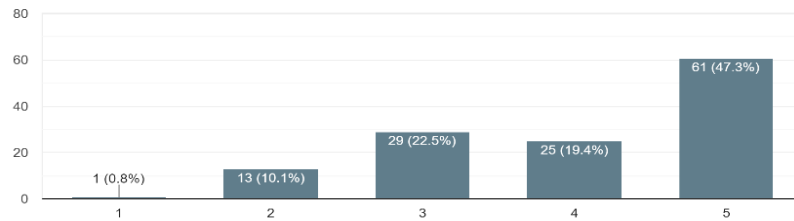
129 responses



**Figure 9:** Responses to S3:Q4 displayed as both number and percentage.

How large of a concern would you say missing women who identify as American Indian/Alaska Native is in the U.S.?

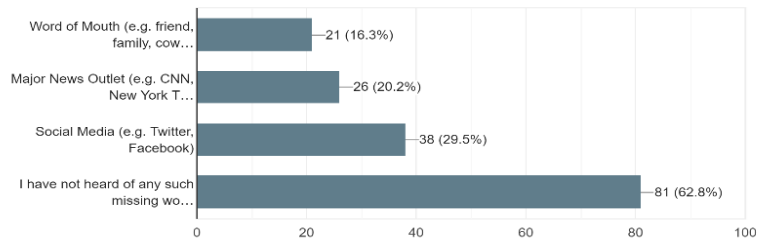
129 responses



**Figure 10:** Responses to S3:Q7 displayed as both number and percentage.

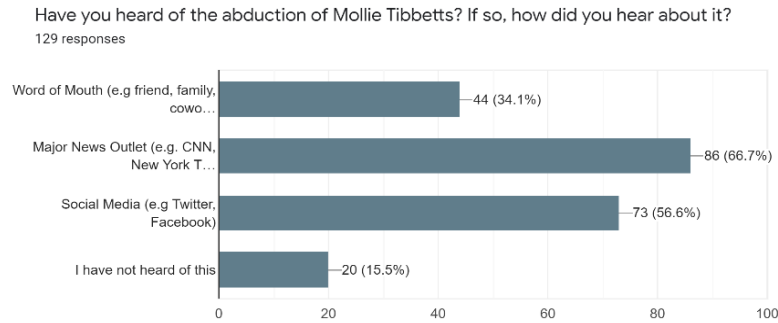
Have you heard about a missing American Indian/Alaska Native woman in the last year? If so, how did you hear about it?

129 responses

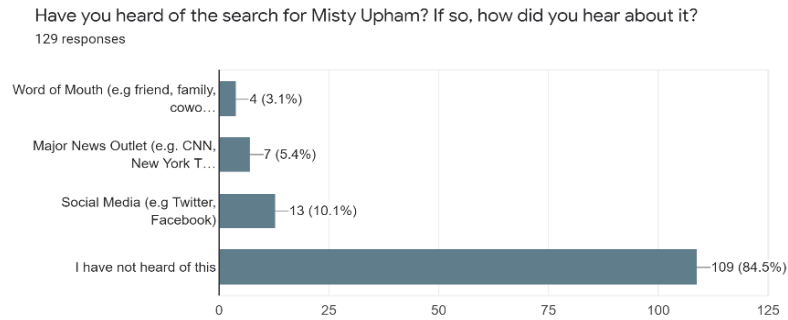


**Figure 11:** Responses to S3:Q8 displayed as both number and percentage.





**Figure 12:** Responses to S3:Q9 displayed as both number and percentage.



**Figure 13:** Responses to S3:Q10 displayed as both number and percentage.

Participants also had the option to answer three open-ended questions at the end of the survey (S3:Q11, S3:Q12, S3:Q13). These questions were included to further gauge the participants' knowledge on the topic of missing women in the United States as well as give the respondents an opportunity to make any additional comments concerning the topic or the survey. Two of the open-ended questions were directed to better understand how many individuals the survey participants thought went missing from either college campuses or Native American reservations in the last ten years. These responses can be

seen in Tables 3 and 4. Table 5 provides an overview of the descriptive statistics calculated from Tables 3 and 4. Additionally, some of the participants' responses to the final question (S3:Q13) are provided in Table 6.

**Table 3-**Responses to “How many women do you think went missing from college campuses in the U.S. in the last ten years?” (S3:Q11)

Number of Missing Women (College)	Number of Respondents
10	3
15	3
20	8
25	4
30	2
40	4
42	1
45	1
50	11
55	1
75	1
100	13
110	1
120	1
129	1
150	5
200	3
230	1
250	5
300	2
354	1
500	6
700	2
780	1
800	1
1000	15
2000	4
3000	1
5000	2
5800	1
7000	2
7769	1
8000	3
10000	3
15000	1
20000	1
750000	1
5000000	1

\*Responses in a non-numerical format were not included.

**Table 4-**Responses to “How many women do you think went missing from Native American reservations in the U.S. in the last ten years?” (S3:Q12)

Number of Missing Women	Number of Respondents
10	2
15	2
20	8
30	1
40	1
50	3
60	1
70	1
75	4
80	2
100	13
120	1
125	1
150	6
200	9
250	4
300	4
350	1
400	1
500	9
537	1
600	1
609	1
750	1
900	1
1000	10
1500	1
2000	4
2500	2
3000	4
5000	5
7200	1
7500	1
8500	1
10000	1
12000	1
15000	1
20000	1
30000	2
60000	1
950000	1
2000000	1

\*Responses in a non-numerical format were not included.

**Table 5-** Descriptive Statistics for S3:Q11 and S3:Q12

	<i>Missing AI/AN Women</i>	<i>Missing Women from College Campuses</i>
Mean	27588.13	50129.78
Standard Error	18845.45	42780.52
Median	250	150
Mode	100	1000
Standard Deviation	203844.7	464715.4
Sample Variance	4.16E+10	2.16E+11
Range	1999990	4999990
Minimum	10	10
Maximum	2000000	5000000

**Table 6-** Responses to “Additional Comments?” (S3:Q13)

Natives on the reservation are often forgotten, or not considered an equally important person. It is often thought, well she must have been drunk or doing drugs, instead of the urgency to find them.

It seems to me that issue of missing Native American women is under-reported and assigned little importance in America.

I think sexual assault and missing women is a very big problem in both schools and the world in general. Women often do not speak up if they have been sexually assaulted as they are ashamed/ embarrassed and this needs to change. We need to take action ignorer to stop these horrible things from happening.

I do believe that more cultural awareness needs to be spread throughout the world. Most of our history has been a lie or fabricated (concealing the truth). I wish there was more that I could do to help those who are discriminated, prejudiced, or at a disadvantage just because they are part of minority (subordinate) group. Much of our present society is so messed because of societal/gender constructs and colonialism with different norms or expectations of how people should behave. We are human beings, not machines. We should not be told how we must live our lives, when we only get one chance to make the most of it.

I know this is a very big issue.

*\*Responses with no further elaboration were not included (e.g. None, Good Luck).*

A two-tailed T-test was performed to better understand if there was a statistically significant difference between how respondents answered certain questions. T-tests are utilized to evaluate the null hypothesis that the mean of two different populations are equal. For this specific survey, the T-test can assess if two different scale format questions were or were not answered the same by participants. Four questions were

compared to test for significant differences (S3:Q1 and S3:Q5 were compared as were S3:Q3 and S3:Q7). One grouping of these questions (S3:Q1 and S3:Q5) looked at the participants' self-reported level of concern for sexual assault on either a college campus or against a Native American women. The level of concern for a missing female student from a college campus or a missing woman that identifies as AI/AN were also compared (S3:Q3 and S3:Q7).

The two tailed t-test identified that there was no statistically significant difference between the responses to the questions concerning sexual assault in the two different female populations (college students and AI/AN). However, the test did indicate a significant difference in the second grouping of interest. When comparing S3:Q5 and S3:Q7 the null hypothesis can be rejected because the mean response to this question is different. The question concerning the concern level for a missing female student was answered differently than the concern for a missing AI/AN woman with respondents indicating a higher level of concern for a potential missing female college student.

**Table 7-** Two Tailed T-test Comparing S3:Q1 and S3:Q5  
 “How large of a concern would you say sexual assault is for either:  
 college campuses in America or women who identify as American Indian/Alaskan  
 Native”

	<i>College Campuses</i>	<i>AI/AN Women</i>
Mean	4.085271318	4.031008
Variance	0.672359496	1.030281
Observations	129	129
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
Df	245	
t Stat	0.472325839	
P(T<=t) one-tail	0.318557334	
t Critical one-tail	1.65109682	
P(T<=t) two-tail	0.637114668	
t Critical two-tail	1.969693921	

**Table 8-** Two Tailed T-test Comparing S3:Q3 and S3:Q7  
 “How large of a concern would you say a missing woman is either: a female student on a college campus or a woman who identifies as American Indian/Alaskan Native”

	<i>College Campuses</i>	<i>AI/AN Women</i>
Mean	4.372093	4.023256
Variance	0.766715	1.179142
Observations	129	129
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
Df	245	
<b>t Stat</b>	<b>2.840286</b>	
P(T<=t) one-tail	0.002443	
t Critical one-tail	1.651097	
P(T<=t) two-tail	0.004886	
<b>t Critical two-tail</b>	<b>1.969694</b>	

The statistical significance found in the two tables shown above can be understand by looking at the p-value (depicted as P(T<=t) two-tail) calculated for the data sets. The null hypothesis for both of these paired t-tests would be that the means of the two population are equal. The alternative hypothesis would simply state that the means are not equal. If the p-value is less than the desired significance level of  $p=.05$ , the difference between the means is statistically significant and the null hypothesis can be rejected. The calculated p-value for a two-tail t-test was used as this test allows for one population to be greater than or less than the other. Comparing responses to S3:Q1 and S3:Q5 resulted in a p-value of .637, which is not less than the standard significance level. However, the p-value of .005 calculated from the comparison of S3:Q3 and S3:Q7 is statistically significant.

## **CHAPTER TEN**

### **Discussion**

The prominent levels of sexual assault and missing individuals in certain populations in the United States are extremely concerning (Rosay, 2016). However, as can be seen from the results of this survey, information concerning these topics has not been widely studied and disseminated to the public. For example, open-ended questions regarding the number of missing women in the United States received answers ranging from ten individuals to five million individuals. This shows that most, if not all, participants had little previous knowledge about the topic and were forced to make a guess about the question. While this is a difficult statistic to formulate, it was mentioned in Chapter Two: Prevalence in Society, that 5,712 AI/AN women were missing in 2016 alone (Urban Indian Health Institute, 2016). Not all missing women in these reports are new cases, but this would be a starting point to understanding that more than ten women have gone missing in the last ten years. Information gained from the online survey is another starting point to better understand what the general public thinks about issues concerning women and where they got that information.

As stated previously, there was no statistically significant difference between how participants responded to the two scale questions detailing their concern about sexual assault perpetrated on a college campus or against AI/AN women. However, by looking at the mean of the assigned scores (4.08527 and 4.0310 respectively), it can be assumed that both of these scenarios are a large concern for survey respondents. Major differences

are seen between these two questions when we look at where participants had heard about sexual assault either on a college campus or against an AI/AN woman. Questions (S3:Q2 and S3:Q6) showed that more respondents (n=85) had never heard of any sexual assault perpetrated against an AI/AN woman than had never heard of an act of sexual assault on a college campus (n=17). Of those who had heard about an act of sexual assault perpetrated against either population from a major news outlet (e.g. CNN, New York Times) more (n=55) heard about a sexual assault on a college campus than of an AI/AN woman (n=19).

The topic of missing women in the United States did reveal statistical differences in how survey participants responded. That is, participants responded to the 1-5 scale questions (S3:Q5 and S3:Q7) “how large of a concern would you say a missing female student on a college campus in the U.S” and “how large of a concern would you say missing women who identify as American Indian/Alaska Native are in the U.S” differently. The question covering college students received a higher score indicating concern (mean=4.372) than the question about AI/AN women (mean=4.0232). Once again, more people (n=81) had never heard about a missing AI/AN woman than those who had never heard of a missing woman on a college campus (n=69). Also, more participants heard about a missing college woman (n=40) than a missing AI/AN woman (n=26) from a major news outlet.

Real world examples of missing women either from a college campus or that identify as Native American can be seen in S3:Q9 and S3:Q10. Question nine asked if participants had heard of the abduction of Mollie Tibbetts and question ten asked if they had heard about the disappearance of Misty Upham. Tibbetts was a white college



student who disappeared in 2018 and was later found dead (Bacon, Fleig, James, Ta, 2018). Her disappearance received national media coverage which can be seen in participants (n=86) who cited a major news outlet as their source of hearing about Tibbetts. In fact, this was the only survey question where participants were more likely to cite a major news outlet than social media as their source for learning about this event. In contrast, Upham's case notable received less media and law enforcement attention. Upham was a Native American actress known for her role in the movie *Frozen River*. She was reported missing by her family in 2014 and was later found dead (Young, 2015). A majority of survey participants (n=109) had never heard of her disappearance and only a few (n=7) had heard of this case from a major news outlet.

Media representation may be a factor in how participants rated their concern about issues facing AI/AN women and women on college campuses. As discussed in Chapter Four: Representation in Media, many Americans have no daily interactions with Native Americans and are not often presented with opportunities to form their own opinions of this diverse racial group. More so, negative stereotypes portrayed by the media of minority groups could decrease the concern that the general public feels for the issues facing these minority groups. In regard to missing women, a study conducted by Jeanis and Powers (2017), found that missing cases of individuals that are young, female, and white are more likely to gain media attention, especially on the national level. This phenomenon was seen in the case of Mollie Tibbetts, but it is difficult to tell how widespread this effect is.

The free response question (S3:Q13) on the survey allowed participants to share any information that they thought was relevant to the survey. Most respondents chose not to

respond (n=118) or added responses with no further elaboration such as “Good luck” or “None”. However, several participants expressed their concern for issues facing Native Americans, especially those living on tribal lands on reservations, and the wellbeing of women in general. These comments reinforce the idea that sexual assault and other acts of violence against women are a topic of deep concern to the public. However, while the topics may be concerning, there seems to be a lack of information regarding crimes perpetrated against women especially all minority groups.

The potential limitations to this study must be considered when trying to understand the survey data. This study was conducted using minimal resources on a college campus in the Midwest. Therefore, though the authors tried to gain a large variety in the participant population, 67.4 percent of those who responded were college students and 93 percent identified as white. The information obtained from the survey may be representative of a small portion of the population, but not the perception of the entire United States. Obtaining a larger sample size would help to better understand how the entire country perceives these issues. However, because South Dakota does have a larger number of Native Americans and greater area of tribal lands it is important to know how individuals that do not identify as Native American in this state understand issues facing the AI/AN population.

The results of the survey indicate that there is still much to be done to better inform the public of the numerous issue facing women in the United States. More accurate and diverse media representation for minority populations is one area that could improve how the general public perceives issues facing more invisible ethnic and racial groups. However, while media attention of the negative issues facing minority groups would help

to bring awareness there is still more work that can be done. Mass media also needs to showcase the positive aspects of unique minority groups. Members of the majority group in the United States need to be aware that there is a fine line between bring awareness to problems and exploiting groups to make a profit.

## **CHAPTER TWELVE**

### **Conclusion**

#### **Limitations**

Unfortunately, due to the nature of sexual assault and missing person's reporting there are many potential barriers to reporting completely accurate information. A report from the U.S. Department of Justice estimates that 74 percent of attempted sexual assaults against women are never reported to the police (Rennison, 2002). This means that the true incidence of sexual violence in the United States is often much more pervasive than what is reported by studies that cite statistics from law enforcement.

Other barriers that could impact reports associated with violence against women, specifically AI/AN women, may include the circumstances surrounding these crimes. Involvement of IHS as a health service provider to many individuals in this population adds another layer of complexity for reporting. The incidence of various health states can vary depending on the organization that is doing the reporting. Reported crimes committed on tribal lands could also be skewed due to the interactions between tribal and federal law enforcement. Non-American Indian perpetrators committing crimes on tribal lands are yet another barrier for efficient and expedited criminal investigations. However, policing and prosecution of these crimes are critical to preventing recidivism. Sexual offenders that target vulnerable populations, such as Native American women, must be identified and stopped.

## **Recommendations**

Due to the scope of this body of work, it is impossible to fully examine all aspects involved in the complex issue of violence against women. Future studies have several avenues that they may take to further investigate this issue. Understanding how tribal lands are policed is a vital factor in knowing how to better protect the women living there. Studying how sexual violence cases perpetrated against AI/AN women are handed on tribal lands could help to make these investigations more efficient and effective.

To help protect the health of American Indian women social media campaigns can be implemented immediately. Campaigns using the hashtag #MMIW have already been established to bring light to missing and murdered Indigenous women throughout the world (Moeke-Pickering, Cote-Meek, & Pegoraro, 2018). However, this movement can be further developed to include sexual violence and other issues impacting indigenous populations. Until major news outlets increase the visibility of minority groups in the United States, social media platforms will be essential to raise awareness for issues facing indigenous populations. Further, from the survey it is apparent that many individuals receive their news from social media outlets and utilizing these platforms may allow for more urgent dissemination of information.

Policy written to protect women in the United States, especially women that identify as part of a minority group is an area of law that is needed to secure the health and wellbeing of these groups, however implementation of new legislation will not be accomplished quickly. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, societal factors that influence the high rates of sexual violence against women include

societal norms that aid in the support of “male superiority and sexual entitlement” while also suggesting women’s inferiority (2020). Ineffective laws and policies are a piece in this complex puzzle that impact societal norms. To combat this, a full report of the history of laws and policies pertaining to AI/AN women as well as recommendations to the current members of Congress would be beneficial. Recommendations could also be an initial step towards advocating for new legislation.

### **Final Remarks**

Despite limitations, this literature review and study was able to bring light to issues that are threatening the safety of AI/AN women in the United States. From the survey responses, it is clear that information concerning sexual assault and missing women in the United States are topics that the public is often not accurately informed on. However, the survey also revealed that these two issues were a large concern for survey respondents. These positive responses show that this issue is one that the public will support once information is brought to the forefront.

The future of this topic is critical to the health and wellbeing of thousands of young AI/AN women in the United States. A main priority to the resolution of this topic is more current and in-depth surveillance into the issue. Finding the true incidence of sexual violence in the Native American population will be a major step toward allocating resources and writing legislation to mitigate the issue. Future studies are needed to continually bring these issues to light and demand that American Indian populations in the United States are not forgotten.

## APPENDICES

Appendix A  
South Dakota Tribal Lands

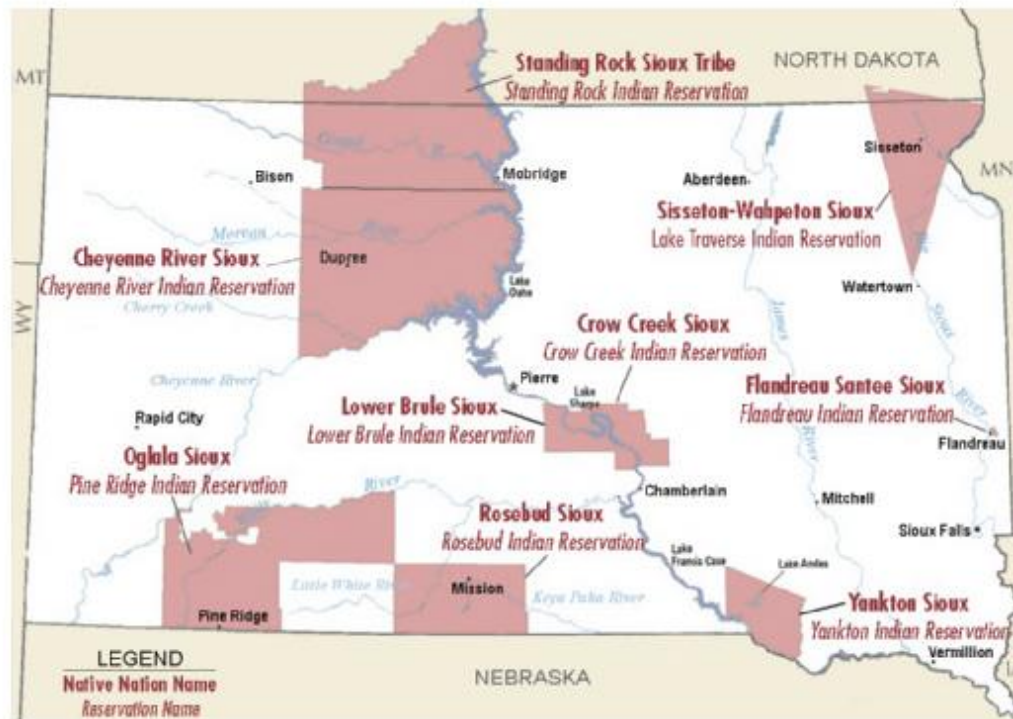


Figure adapted from Federal Lands and Indian Reservations by the U.S Department of the Interior, U.S. Geological Survey.

[https://nationalmap.gov/small\\_scale/printable/images/pdf/fedlands/SD.pdf](https://nationalmap.gov/small_scale/printable/images/pdf/fedlands/SD.pdf)



## Appendix B Original IRB Approval



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March 26, 2019

The University of South Dakota  
414 E. Clark Street  
Vermillion, SD 57069

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**PI:** Turgeon-Drake, Jamie

**Co-PI:**

**Student PI:** Clement, Kaci

**Project:** Missing and Endangered Women in the United States

**Review Level:** Expedited 7 **Risk:** No more than minimal

**USD IRB Project Approval Period:** March 26, 2019 - March 25, 2020

**Continuation or Closure due:** 14 days before the IRB expiration date of March 25, 2020

**Approved items associated with your project:**

Survey Advertisement Date Stamped Informed Consent

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Dear Jamie Turgeon-Drake,

The study submission for the proposal referenced above has been reviewed and approved via the procedures of the University of South Dakota Institutional Review Board.

Attached in your file is your original consent document that has been stamped with IRB approval and expiration date. You **must** keep this original on file. Please use the original consent document to make copies for subject enrollment. **No** other consent form should be used. It **must** be signed by each subject prior to initiation of any protocol procedures. In addition, each subject must be given a copy of the signed consent form.

Your study has been granted a **Waiver of Documentation of Informed Consent**. As a replacement for a signed consent you must provide your subjects with an informed consent document without signature lines. You **must** document this informed consent process in your study records. Attached in your file is the informed consent that

has been stamped with IRB approval and expiration date. Please use the original document to make copies for subject enrollment. If appropriate, please give a copy to your subject.

All updates and revisions to this protocol must be requested with an amendment form. The proposed revisions may not be implemented until the amendment has been approved.

Any research-related injuries (physical or psychological), adverse events, or unanticipated problems encountered during the conduct of this research study need to be reported to the IRB within 5 days of it occurring or the PI being notified of it.

You have approval for this project through March 25, 2020. When this study has been completed, please notify the Office of Human Subjects Protection. If you wish to continue the study, a continuation application must be submitted at least 14 days prior to the expiration date.

If you have any questions, please contact: [humansubjects@usd.edu](mailto:humansubjects@usd.edu) or (605) 677-6184.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads 'Ann Waterbury'.

Ann Waterbury, MBA, CIM  
Director, Human Subject Protection Program  
University of South Dakota  
(605) 677-6067

## Appendix C

### Survey Informed Consent Statement

IRB Approval effective from: 3/26/2019  
IRB Approval not valid after: 3/25/2020  
USD IRB

#### Informed Consent Statement

Title of Project: Missing and Endangered Women in the United States

Principle Investigator: Jamie Turgeon-Drake, 321 Beacom Hall, Vermillion SD 57069  
(605) 658-5955 Jamie.Turgeon-Drake@usd.edu

Other Investigators: Kaci Clement, 120 Old Main, Vermillion, SD 57069

#### Purpose of the Study:

The literature review will focus on missing and endangered women in the United States. Specifically looking at how specific racial/ethnic groups are victimized at disproportionate rates when compared to others. The survey portion of the study will evaluate what knowledge the general public has on the topic of missing and endangered women and how they acquired that knowledge.

#### Procedures to be followed:

You will be asked to answer 19 questions on a survey. The questions are presented in three formats: scale, multiple choice, and free response. The questions in the scale format will present a series of statements and you will need to indicate to what extent you agree with a five-point scale. Multiple choice questions will provide a few choices and you will need to select the best answer(s) or indicate an option that was not included. Finally, the free response questions will consist of a prompt with a space to record your answer.

#### Risks:

Some of the questions are personal and might cause discomfort. If you would like to talk to someone about your feelings regarding this study, you are encouraged to contact the University of South Dakota's Student Counseling Center at (605) 677-5777 which provides counseling services to USD students at no charge. If you are not affiliated with USD, you are encouraged to contact the National Helpline at 1-800-661-4357 which provides free referral and information service for individuals facing mental and/or substance use disorders to local treatment facilities, support groups, and community-based organizations.

#### Benefits:

You may not benefit personally from participating in this research project, however:

- You may learn more about your overall knowledge of current news topics.
- You may realize more about your personal news consumption.
- The information collected may help to inform others about the issue of missing and endangered women in the United States.

#### Duration:

This research survey will take approximately 5-10 minutes to complete all questions.

**Statement of Confidentiality:**

The survey does not ask for any information that would identify who the responses belong to. Therefore, your responses are recorded anonymously. If this research is published, no information that would identify you will be included since your name is in no way linked to your responses.

All survey responses received will be treated confidentially and stored on a secure server. However, given that the surveys can be completed from any computer (e.g. personal, work, school), we are unable to guarantee the security of the computer on which you choose to enter your responses. As a participant in our study, we want you to be aware that certain "key logging" software programs exist that can be used to track or capture data that you enter and/or websites that you visit.

**Right to Ask Questions:**

The researchers conducting this study are Jamie Turgeon-Drake and Kaci Clement. You may ask any questions you have now. If you later have any questions, concerns, or complaints about the research please contact Jamie Turgeon-Drake at (605) 658-5955 during the day.

If you have questions regarding your rights as a research subject, you may contact The University of South Dakota Office of Human Subjects Protection at (605) 677-6184. You may also call this number with problems, complaints, or concerns about this research. Please call this number if you cannot reach research staff, or you wish to talk with someone who is an informed individual that is independent of the research team.

**Compensation:**

You will not receive compensation for your participation.

**Voluntary Participation:**

You do not have to participate in this research. You can stop your participation at any time. You may refuse to participate or choose to discontinue participation at any time without losing any benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

You do not have to answer any questions you do not want to answer.

For this study, you must be 18 years of age or older to consent to participate in this research study.

Completion and return of the survey implies that you have read the information in this form and consent to participate in the research.

Please keep this form for your records of future reference.

## Appendix D Survey

1. I have read and understand the previous information concerning my rights as a voluntary research participant. \*

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Yes     Skip to question 2.  
☐ No     Start this form over.

### Demographics

2. Which gender do you most identify with? \*

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Female  
☐ Male  
☐ Non-Binary  
☐ Prefer not to say  
☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

3. What is your age? \*

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ 18-24  
☐ 25-34  
☐ 35-44  
☐ 45-54  
☐ 55-64  
☐ 65 or over

**4. How would you describe yourself? \****Check all that apply.*

- ☐ Asian
- ☐ Black or African American
- ☐ American Indian or Alaska Native
- ☐ Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
- ☐ Non-Hispanic White
- ☐ Hispanic or Latino
- ☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**5. Are you currently attending an academic institution? If so, what is your current standing? \****Mark only one oval.*

- ☐ Freshman
- ☐ Sophomore
- ☐ Junior
- ☐ Senior
- ☐ Graduate Student
- ☐ I am not a student

**6. Where do you get most of your news information? \****Check all that apply.*

- ☐ Social Media Outlets (e.g. Twitter, Facebook)
- ☐ Paper News
- ☐ TV News Networks (e.g. CNN, FOX News, local stations)
- ☐ Other Online Outlets (e.g. BuzzFeed, BBC)
- ☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**7. How knowledgeable would you say you are on current news topics? \****Mark only one oval.*

	1	2	3	4	5	
No Knowledge	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Very Knowledgeable

**Knowledge of Missing and Endangered Women****8. How large of a concern would you say sexual assault is on college campuses in the U.S.? \****Mark only one oval.*

	1	2	3	4	5	
No Concern	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Extreme Concern

9. Have you heard about a sexual assault on a college campus in the last year? If so, how did you hear about it? \*

Check all that apply.

- ☐ Word of mouth (e.g. friend, family, coworker)
- ☐ Major News Outlet (e.g. CNN, New York Times)
- ☐ Social Media (e.g. Twitter, Facebook)
- ☐ I have not heard of any sexual assaults

10. How large of a concern would you say a missing female student would be on a college campus in the U.S.? \*

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
No Concern	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Extreme Concern

11. Have you heard about a missing woman on a college campus in the last year? If so, how did you hear about it? \*

Check all that apply.

- ☐ Word of Mouth (e.g. friend, family, coworker)
- ☐ Major News Outlet (e.g. CNN, New York Times)
- ☐ Social Media (e.g. Twitter, Facebook)
- ☐ I have not heard of any missing women.

12. How large of a concern would you say sexual assault is for women who identify as American Indian/Alaska Native in the U.S.? \*

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
No Concern	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Extreme Concern

13. Have you heard about a sexual assault of a American Indian/Alaska Native woman in the last year? If so, how did you hear about it? \*

Check all that apply.

- ☐ Word of Mouth (e.g. friend, family, coworker)
- ☐ Major News Outlet (e.g. CNN, New York Times)
- ☐ Social Media (e.g. Twitter, Facebook)
- ☐ I have not heard of any such sexual assault

14. How large of a concern would you say missing women who identify as American Indian/Alaska Native is in the U.S.? \*

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
No Concern	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Extreme Concern

15. **Have you heard about a missing American Indian/Alaska Native woman in the last year? If so, how did you hear about it? \***

*Check all that apply.*

- ☐ Word of Mouth (e.g. friend, family, coworker)
- ☐ Major News Outlet (e.g. CNN, New York Times)
- ☐ Social Media (e.g. Twitter, Facebook)
- ☐ I have not heard of any such missing women

16. **Have you heard of the abduction of Mollie Tibbetts? If so, how did you hear about it? \***

*Check all that apply.*

- ☐ Word of Mouth (e.g friend, family, coworker, class)
- ☐ Major News Outlet (e.g. CNN, New York Times)
- ☐ Social Media (e.g Twitter, Facebook)
- ☐ I have not heard of this

17. **Have you heard of the search for Misty Upham? If so, how did you hear about it? \***

*Check all that apply.*

- ☐ Word of Mouth (e.g friend, family, coworker, class)
- ☐ Major News Outlet (e.g. CNN, New York Times)
- ☐ Social Media (e.g Twitter, Facebook)
- ☐ I have not heard of this

18. **How many women do you think went missing from college campuses in the U.S. in the last ten years? \***

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19. **How many women do you think went missing from Native American reservations in the U.S. in the last ten years? \***

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20. **Additional Comments?**

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